

Nadler Introduces Resolution Honoring 50th Anniversary of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Tuesday, 12 April 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) introduced a resolution recognizing the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism (RAC). For 50 years, the RAC has been at the center of progressive political action on civil rights, ethnic and religious tolerance, ending Apartheid, freeing Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union, and many other issues.

"I am delighted to offer this resolution honoring the 50th anniversary of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism," said Congressman Nadler. "The Center's important work on behalf of so many communities - African-American, Jewish, South African, Tibetan, and Russian, among many others - has been a critical component of the civil rights and pro-democracy movements of the past five decades. I heartily congratulate the RAC and its committed leaders on 50 years of outstanding service to Americans and supporters of freedom everywhere."

"We are deeply honored that Representative Nadler and his colleagues have chosen to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Religious Action Center and to mark the activism of Reform Jews and communities across the country with this tribute," said Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the RAC. "The Center has a long history of collaboration with Members of Congress in pursuit of social justice and we are deeply appreciative of Congressman Nadler's honoring us with this resolution. From being a powerful voice for Israel to standing up for LGBTQ equality and to his firm defense of religious liberty, Congressman Nadler's body of legislative work truly exemplifies our mission of tikkun olam (repairing the world). We sincerely thank him and the other co-sponsors for this touching acknowledgment."

The text of the resolution follows and is attached as a pdf:

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Whereas the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism was established in 1961 by the Union of American Hebrew

Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism) and the Central Conference of American Rabbis as the social justice arm of the Reform Jewish Movement;

Whereas President John F. Kennedy dedicated the Religious Action Center in a special tribute in the White House Rose Garden during which he spoke of the lasting contribution of Jews to the moral fabric of American society and the "happy relations which exist between all religious groups and must continue to exist in this country if we are to be worthy of our heritage";

Whereas the Religious Action Center building was officially dedicated in Washington, DC, in the presence of guests including Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg, Union of American Hebrew Congregations President Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, Howard Metzenbaum (later Senator from Ohio), NAACP Board of Directors Chairman Bishop Stephen Spottswood, (soon to be) NAACP President Kivie and Mrs. Emily Kaplan, Directors of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, Rabbi Eugene Lipman and Al Vorspan, and the Center's first director, Rabbi Richard Hirsh;

Whereas the Religious Action Center was home to multiple civil rights and public interest organizations, including the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and the Citizens Crusade against Poverty;

Whereas the Religious Action Center participated in the planning of the historic 1963 March on Washington for Civil Rights;

Whereas the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were drafted in the Religious Action Center's conference room by African-American, Jewish, and other civil rights leaders;

Whereas the Religious Action Center building was the operational headquarters for the 1987 March on Washington for Soviet Jewry, one of the largest demonstrations in United States history and which contributed to the release of the Soviet Union's Prisoners of Zion;

Whereas in 1995, Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu addressed the Religious Action Center's Consultation on Conscience and thanked the Reform Jewish Movement for its role in the battle to end apartheid;

Whereas the Religious Action Center hosted a 1997 Passover Seder in honor of the Dalai Lama and the struggle for Religious Freedom and Human Rights in Tibet;

Whereas the Religious Action Center has perpetuated the Reform Jewish commitment to social justice through its programs training new generations of leaders, including the Eisendrath Legislative Assistant Program, the Machon Kaplan program, the L'Taken Teen Social Justice Seminars, the England Rabbinic Student Seminars, and the Rabbi Balfour Brickner Rabbinic Seminars;

Whereas the Religious Action Center has been led for nearly four decades by Rabbi David Saperstein, who is a leading voice in support of religious freedom and social justice and a trusted counsel to Members of Congress and Presidents;

Whereas the Religious Action Center is the home of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, which seeks to apply the insights of Jewish tradition to such domestic and foreign issues as human rights, world peace, civil liberties, religious freedom, famine, poverty, intergroup relations, as well as other major societal concerns;

Whereas the Religious Action Center's biennial "Consultation on Conscience" conference has, for more than 30 years, been the flagship public policy conference for the Reform Jewish Movement, featuring a bipartisan array of Presidents, Members of Congress, public policy experts, and human and civil rights leaders;

Whereas the Religious Action Center's biennial "Consultation on Conscience" conference this year takes place May 1, 2011, through May 3, 2011, and celebrates the Religious Action Center's 50 years of activism and advocacy for social justice; and

Whereas the Religious Action Center continues to be a leading advocate for civil rights, human rights, religious liberty,

and economic and environmental justice in the United States and around the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives recognizes the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Union for Reform Judaism, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Center's founding.

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